Wyoming Game and Fish Department

2006 Edition

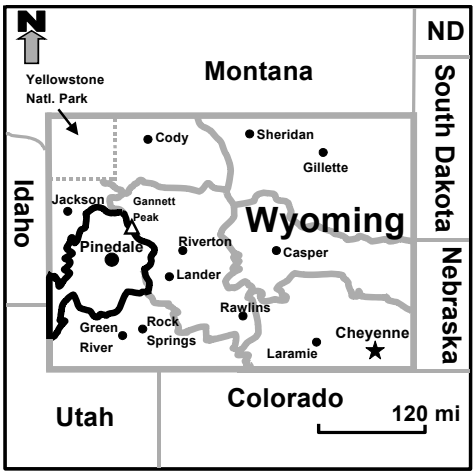
Volume 2, Issue 1

Welcome Interested Public!

This newsletter is designed to inform interested public of the activities of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Fish Division within the Pinedale Region. The Pinedale region encompasses the Upper Green River Drainage (upstream of Fontenelle Reservoir) and parts of the Bear River drainage around Cokeville (see map).

It is our intent to produce up-to-date newsletters each year to keep you informed on findings, progress, and recommendations from the previous year. This newsletter is intended for everyone interested in the aquatic resources in the Pinedale area. The resources we manage belong to all of us.

We hope you find this newsletter useful and informative. Please direct any feedback that you may have or suggestions for improvements to the contact listed on the back page of this publication.



WGFD Regional Map: Pinedale Region outlined in black.

Inside this issue:

Pinedale Region Fisheries Staff:

Fish Management Crew
Hilda Sexauer (Fisheries Supervisor)
Pete Cavalli (Fisheries Biologist)
Matt Kondratieff (Fisheries Biologist)

Aquatic Habitat Biologist
Floyd Roadifer (Habitat Biologist)

Spawning Specialists
Brian King (Spawning Coordinator)
Pete Feck (Spawning Specialist)

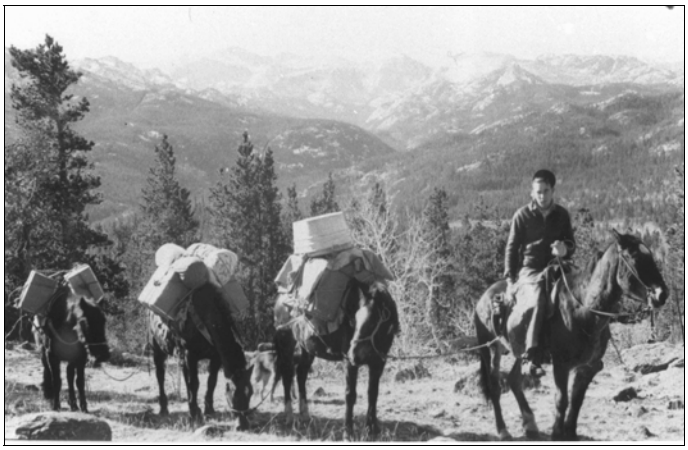
Boulder Rearing Station Crew
Chip Moller (Superintendent)
Alan Shaffer (Asst. Superintendent)
Joe Gillis (Fish Culturist)

Daniel Fish Hatchery Crew
George Gunn (Superintendent)
Greg Anderson (Asst. Superintendent)
Eli Cureton (Fish Culturist)*
*No longer working for Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

History of Golden Trout Stocking in the Winds

Eli Cureton
Fish Culturist

Although there is some discrepancy in the records on when golden trout (*Oncorhynchus aguabonita*) were first brought into Wyoming, we do know for sure where they were first planted. Cook Lake in Sublette County received 2,000 golden trout some time around 1929. This population soon established itself in the lake. Wyoming Game and Fish personnel, U. S. Forest Service employees, and even some ranchers loaded up milk cans full of fish, stuffed them in their panniers and promptly started stocking any lake that looked like suitable trout habitat. In 1948, Cook Lake, the original stocking site, would produce the world record golden trout weighing in at eleven pounds four ounces.



Jim Gustin (Wyoming Game & Fish Department) returning from a fish stocking trip to the high mountain lakes of the Wind River Mountains.

(Continued on page 2)

Fishing Regulation Changes: What's New for 2006

Matt Kondratieff
Fisheries Biologist

There are few changes to the Pinedale regional fishing regulations for 2006. However, some of these changes are significant and anglers will want to make a note of them. Be sure to get a complete copy of the 2006 fishing regulations (photo left) and familiarize yourself with regulations associated with the waters you plan to fish before leaving for your next fishing trip. You can pick up copies of the 2006 fishing regulations at any fishing license vendor or any Game & Fish regional office. Fishing regulations are also located online at http://gf.state.wy.us/downloads/pdf/fishregs.pdf. Note that any regulation changes for 2006 are highlighted in light blue font. For additional information on fishing regulation changes, contact the Pinedale Regional Game & Fish office (307) 367-4353.

A happy angler with a stringer of rainbow trout from CCC Pond.

Significant regional regulation changes include the following:
1) Limitations on the brook trout creel limit for the Green River drainage have been dropped and are now the same as the statewide brook trout creel limit. This additional creel limit states that 10 brook trout 8 inches or less may be taken in addition to the statewide trout, salmon, and grayling creel limit.
2) North Piney Creek drainage and North Piney Lake: Creel limit is now 6 trout/day or in possession with no more than 2 trout being cutthroat. Only one trout shall exceed 20 inches. Fishing permitted by use of artificial flies and lures only.
3) Green River section change: The Green River from the upstream boundary of the Forty Rod Public Fishing Area downstream to the Swain's Bridge has been changed to the Green River from **Warren Bridge (HWY 191)** downstream to the Swain's Bridge.
4) On the Green River section from the confluence with Kendall Warm Springs downstream to the uppermost boundary of the Warren Bridge access area: Creel limit has been changed to **2** trout, salmon, and grayling/day or possession. Only one trout shall exceed 20 inches. Fishing permitted by use of artificial flies and lures only.
5) On the Green River section from Warren Bridge downstream to Swain's Bridge: Creel limit has been changed to **2** trout, salmon, and grayling/day or possession. Only one trout shall exceed 20 inches. Fishing permitted by use of artificial flies and lures only.
6) On the Green River section from Swain's Bridge downstream to Fontenelle Reservoir, the creel limit has been changed to **3** trout, salmon, and grayling/day or possession. Only one trout shall exceed 20 inches.
7) On the Bear River Drainage in Lincoln and Uinta Counties and the Green River Drainage in Lincoln, Sublette, and Sweetwater counties:

A. The creel limit on ling (burbot) shall be 25/day or in possession. Any ling caught must be immediately killed.
B. The creel limit on walleye shall be 25/day or in possession. Any walleye caught must be immediately killed.

History of Golden Trout Stocking (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Stocking records at the Daniel Fish Hatchery show that throughout the 1940's and 50's, golden trout raised at that facility were planted in lakes like McCloud Lake, Rainbow Lake, Surprise Lake, Pyramid Lake, Porcupine Creek Lakes, East Fork Lakes, Cook Lake, and Bonneville Lake on a bi-annual schedule. Stocking was mostly done by plane, but every so often a lucky soul would get the opportunity to hit the trails with horses and spend time stocking remote wilderness lakes.

Recent photo of Surprise Lake after the 1988 fire. The wooden structure (arrow) was used to trap golden trout during spawning operations.

Spawning operations began in Surprise Lake in 1954, mostly due to its accessibility and relative proximity to Pinedale. Surprise is a 28-acre lake in the Bridger Wilderness located 5 miles from the Meadow Lake trailhead. Once this important source of eggs was secured, stocking was increased both in the number of lakes stocked and how often they were stocked. Some of the lakes to receive goldens were Nelson, Wall, Peak, Stonehammer, Ferry, Tommy, Ridge, Thomas, and Lange Lakes. Daniel Hatchery records show August of 1994 as being the last time a lake was stocked with fish that were taken as eggs from Surprise Lake. In 1988, a fire indirectly created large amounts of sediment that became deposited in the nearby lake. Ultimately, this change would lead to the downfall of this wild broodstock and cause a golden trout egg drought within the Wyoming Game & Fish Department for the next decade.

"In 1948, Cook Lake… would produce the world record golden trout weighing in at 11 pounds 4 ounces."

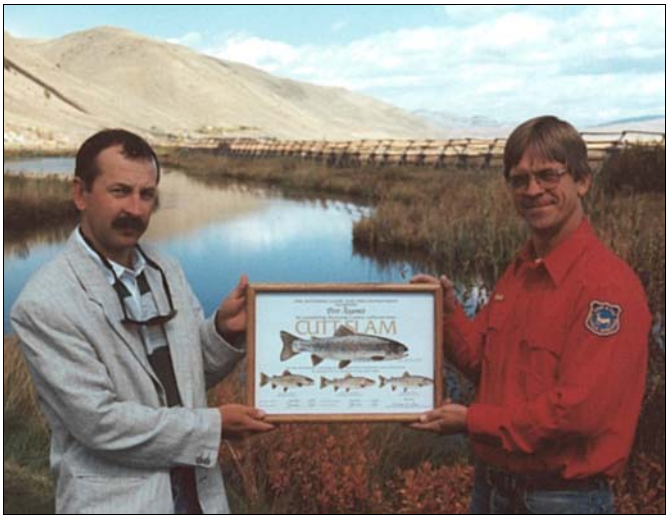
The Wyoming Game & Fish Department currently collects eggs from another high mountain lake in the Wind Rivers. This marks the second year eggs were obtained from this site. Thanks to the hard work of the spawning crew located here in Pinedale, this looks to be a promising site for obtaining golden trout eggs to supplement the current stocking program.

The Cutt-Slam: A Cutthroat is Not Just a Cutthroat

Hilda Sexauer
Regional Fisheries Superviser

Ron Remmick, founder of the WGFD Cutt-Slam Program.

The Cutt-Slam program is designed to encourage anglers to learn more about Wyoming's native cutthroat trout subspecies. It has assisted anglers in understanding the importance of cutthroat trout to Wyoming, developing an appreciation for the species, and supporting the Department's cutthroat trout management programs. The program in return provides the Department with an opportunity to discuss cutthroat and the importance of their habitat with the public.



Ron Remmick presenting the Cutt-Slam award to Petr Axamit from the Czech Republic.

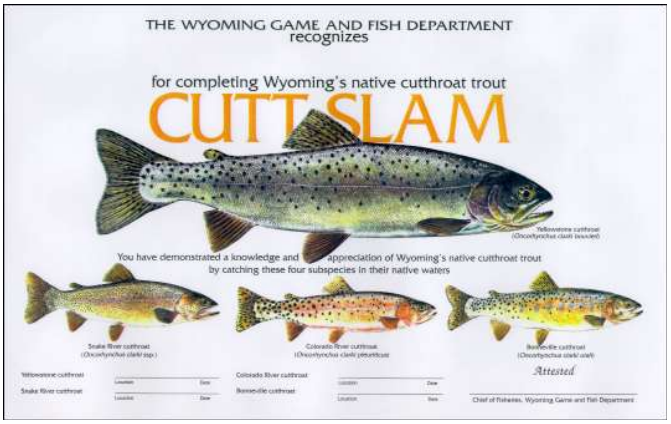
Ron Remmick, a fisheries biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) for 26 years, developed the Cutt-Slam program. His passion for fishing was often shared with anglers and the Cutt-Slam program was only one of his many accomplishments. His enthusiasm and dedication to the resource, particularly cutthroat trout, was second to none. Ron initiated the grand slam for native cutthroat trout in 1996.

For an angler to complete a Cutt-Slam, they need to catch the four cutthroat trout subspecies in their native watersheds for the grand slam: Colorado River cutthroat (Green River drainage), Bonneville cutthroat (Bear River drainage), Snake River cutthroat (Snake River drainage) and Yellowstone cutthroat trout (Missouri River drainage). The tables on page 4 (next page) provide you a few waters to fish for each cutthroat subspecies. Prior to traveling to complete your Cutt-Slam, you should spend some time reviewing each cutthroat subspecies and their native range. A BLM or U.S.F.S. map would be an excellent place to start in locating each of the watersheds and the streams you want to fish.

"Go for your Cutt-Slam – Catch the true Wyoming Natives."

Each subspecies has to be caught in their native habitat and photos are required for proof. The subspecies, drainage, and date the fish was caught must be identified on each photo. In return you will receive a colored certificate featuring each cutthroat trout subspecies with your accomplishments. So during those long cold winter days when warm days of stream fishing are only a memory, start planning your cutthroat adventure. It will require you to do some research on the four cutthroat subspecies since each subspecies is located in a different major drainage in Wyoming. But it will be worth your time. So get ready to embark on a Cutt-Slam adventure this summer!

Here are some Cutt-Slam facts. This year (2006) will mark the 10 year anniversary of WGFD's Cutt-Slam program. The first person to complete the Cutt-Slam was Mackenzie Mixer from Wyoming. To date, a total of 313 people have successfully completed the Cutt-Slam from 37 US states and 2 foreign countries (Canada and the Czech Republic). The following is a list of the total number of Cutt-Slam participants by state: AL (1), AZ (6), CA (13), CO (10), CT (1), DE (1), FL (2), GA (7), ID (5), IL (6), IN (1), IA (5), ME (3), MD (4), MA (1), MI (5), MN (3), MO (6), MT (5), NE (8), NV (1), NJ (3), NY (2), NC (3), OH (2), OK (2), OR (5), PA (6), SD (7), TN (7), TX (8), UT (12), VT (3), VA (2), WA (9), WI (1), and WY (144).



Cutt-Slam participants receive this beautiful award certificate featuring four native Wyoming cutthroat sub-species.

(Continued on page 4)

A Cutthroat is Not Just A Cutthroat (Continued from page 3)

Yellowstone cutthroat trout

Yellowstone Cutthroat Drainages	Regional Office Contact
Yellowstone River watershed	Cody
Clarks Fork River watershed	Cody
Big Horn River watershed	Cody
Shoshone River wateshed	Cody
Buffalo Bill Reservoir	Cody
Little Big Horn River watershed	Sheridan

Colorado River cutthroat trout

Colorado River Cutthroat Drainages	Regional Office Contact
Tepee Creek	Pinedale
Gypsum Creek	Pinedale
South Beaver Creek	Pinedale
Chall Creek	Pinedale
North Horse Creek	Pinedale
South Horse Creek	Pinedale
North Cottonwood and tributaries	Pinedale
South Cottonwood and tributaries	Pinedale
Fish Creek	Pinedale
Trailridge Creek	Pinedale
Tributaries to the Hams Fork River	Green River
Tributaries to the Little Snake	Green River
Gilbert and other tributaries to the Blacks Fork	Green River
Tributaries to the Smiths Fork	Green River

Bear River cutthroat trout

Bonneville Cutthroat Drainages	Regional Office Contact
Lake Alice	Pinedale
Smiths Fork River	Pinedale
North Fork of Smiths Fork River	Pinedale
Hobble Creek	Pinedale
Salt Creek	Pinedale
Water Canyon	Pinedale
Woodruff Reservoir	Green River
Sulphur Creek Reservoir	Green River

Snake River cutthroat trout

Snake River Cutthroat Drainages	Regional Office Contact
Hoback River and tributaries	Jackson
Salt River	Jackson
Greys River and tributaries	Jackson
Gros Ventre River and tributaries	Jackson
Jackson Lake	Jackson
Palisades Reservoir	Jackson

NOTE: If you still have questions, call Wyoming Game & Fish biologists at the appropriate regional offices or view our website: http://gf.state.wy.us/services/customers/cuttslam/index.asp

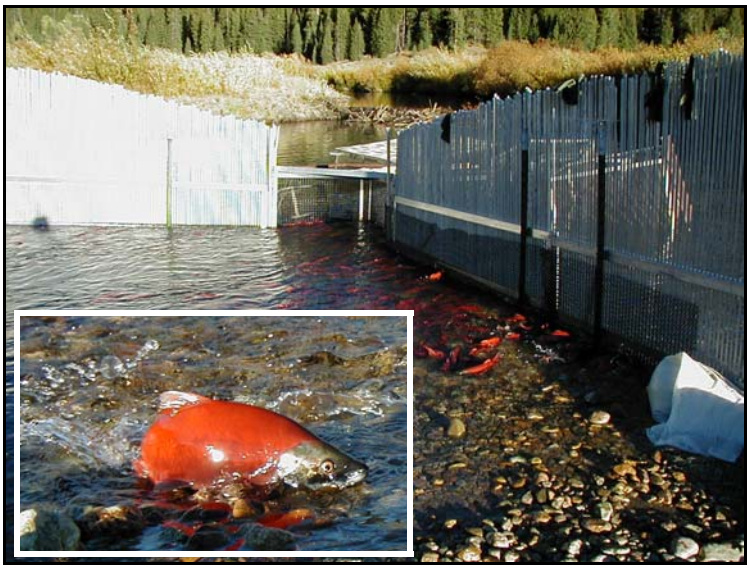
New Fork Lakes Kokanee Spawning Operation

Pete Feck
Spawning Specialist

New Fork Lakes

New Fork Lakes, located north of Pinedale, are a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Besides offering outstanding views, they serve as a popular fishery for both local and non-resident anglers. New Fork Lakes contain rainbow trout, brook trout, lake trout, and kokanee salmon.

Kokanee are a land-locked sockeye salmon. Typically kokanee salmon are silver colored, but during spawning the males turn a brilliant reddish-orange color. Their jaw also develops a prominent hooked shape, and their back develops a hump. The females change to a reddish color too, but not as bright red as the males. As with all Pacific salmon, kokanee die after spawning.



Kokanee entering the spawning trap where they will be captured, sorted, and spawned for eggs and milt.

Kokanee were initially stocked in New Fork Lakes in 1976 by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department to provide a food source for lake trout and to provide angling diversity. Stocking continued throughout the years with the hope of establishing a kokanee brood stock that would provide eggs for the Department's fish culture program. By 1989, adult kokanee started to spawn in the inlet, and the Department took its first eggs. New Fork Lakes now play a key role in the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's fish culture program, as they are currently the main source for kokanee eggs in the state.

Every June the Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocks kokanee fry at the inlet of New Fork Lakes. In late August and early September the adult fish (typically 3 to 4 years old), migrate up the inlet to spawn. In mid to late August the Game and Fish Department's wild fish spawning crew monitor the spawning kokanee. Before the fish start running upstream, the spawning crew installs a trap designed to capture the fish and prevent them from going upstream to spawn. If all the fish were allowed to spawn naturally, they would overpopulate the lake. This would lead to a stunted population and possibly affect other aquatic life in the lake.

"Typically kokanee salmon are silver colored, but during spawning the males turn a brilliant reddish-orange color."

During the spawning run, which lasts from 4 to 6 weeks, Game and Fish personnel are present to clean debris off the trap and move any fish captured from the trap into holding pens. Males and ripe females are held separately. Typically, eggs and milt are collected once per week. About 1000 females are spawned during an average year, and this equates to approximately 575,000 eggs. In 2003, 3750 females were spawned, yielding 1.6 million eggs!

Eggs are taken to a Wyoming Game and Fish Department fish hatchery where they are hatched and raised to the size desired for stocking. The following year the fish are stocked into selected waters around the state. Approximately 25,000 fingerlings are stocked annually into New Fork Lakes. For more information concerning the New Fork Lakes kokanee spawning operation, contact spawning specialists Brian King or Pete Feck @ 367-4353.

Spawning crew taking eggs and milt from kokanee salmon.

Dollar Lake: A Good Bet For Your Next Family Fishing Trip

Matt Kondratieff
Fisheries Biologist

What do you look for when you are planning a family fishing trip to the mountains? For many people, the answer might include a beautiful location with the potential to see wildlife on the way, maybe a swan, osprey, eagle, elk, moose, or maybe even a bear. Some views of the mountains and forest would be nice. How about a sandy beach for the kids to play on and make sandcastles or just set out a towel and watch the clouds? Most people like options: A wadable lake free from back-casting obstacles (like willows) for fly fishing and a snag-free lake with some deeper spots to cast spinning gear or toss a worm if the wind kicks up. Ideally, it would be nice to have a fishable river close by just in case the lake is not fishing well or just to try something different. Of course, its also nice if there are abundant trout and even the chance to catch a big fish.

A boat angler with a nice Dollar Lake rainbow trout.

Well, if this sounds like your family's ideal fishing trip, you should try fishing at Dollar Lake. Dollar Lake is located in the beautiful Upper Green River Valley approximately nine miles past the U.S. Forest Service boundary off of HWY 352 (Cora Highway north of Pinedale). Dollar Lake is a 27-acre lake with a maximum depth of about 34 feet. Because of its small size, it is perfect for a small row boat or canoe. However, use of watercraft with internal combustion motors is prohibited. Dollar Lake periodically fills by overflow from the Green River during high flows, but it is primarily spring fed. Fishing holes on the Green River are located within easy hiking distance from the lake and provide an alternative to lake fishing. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department stocks 3,000 catchable rainbow trout annually into Dollar Lake for your angling pleasure. This lake provides conditions that allow for excellent trout growth rates, with fish reaching 13-15 inches long by the first fall. Most years, fish survive over the winter and will reach 17-20 inches and close to 3 pounds by the second season. In the past, Dollar Lake has experienced periodic winter kills, which means that some or all of the fish in the lake will die off due to a combination of natural environmental conditions (usually related to periods of drought). No documented winter kills have occurred in recent years, with good numbers of fish carrying over from the previous year's stocking (see spring sampling results in table below). This means that there is a good opportunity to catch a big fish. So, for your next family outing, consider Dollar Lake: a good bet for your next family fishing trip!

A large Dollar Lake rainbow trout.

Table 1. Rainbow trout lengths and weights for fish surviving over winter from the previous year's stocking in Dollar Lake.

Year	Length Range (in)	Weight Range (lbs)
2003	10.8-17.6	0.48-2.35
2004	12.0-18.1	0.61-1.78
2005	6.5-20.5	0.18-2.84

Finger Lake Ice Fishing

Matt Kondratieff
Fisheries Biologist

Andy Bennett ice fishing on Half Moon Lake. Photo courtesy of Pinedale Online.

Just because winter is here and the rivers and lakes are frozen doesn't mean that the fishing needs to end! For many experienced anglers, the fun has only just begun! We are blessed with a number of wonderful accessible ice fishing lakes here in Sublette County. These include Lower Green River Lake*, New Fork Lakes*, Willow Lake*, Fremont Lake, Half Moon Lake, and Boulder Lake* (*generally require snowmachine). These lakes are collectively called the "finger lakes" and share some similar characteristics. Like fingers, they are all long, slender-shaped natural lakes that were formed by glacial action during ice ages past. All of these lakes have very cold water and they have similar fish assemblages including lake trout, rainbow trout, kokanee salmon, and occasionally, brook trout, cutthroat trout or brown trout. Basic ice fishing gear includes warm clothes, insulated boots, ice auger, safety gear (ice picks and personal floatation devices) and of course, fishing gear and license. Ice fishing methods include using meal worms, night crawlers, plastics, or sucker meat (must be dead) on a jig head. The use of live bait fish in the Pinedale Region is illegal and this law is strictly enforced.

So pick a lake, grab your gear, and go fishing! If you need help finding your ideal ice fishing spot, need information about ice conditions, or want to know how to prepare for your next ice fishing trip, contact the fisheries biologists at the Pinedale Regional Game & Fish Office, (307) 367-4353.

Research on Bonneville Cutthroat Trout in the Bear River Drainage

Pete Cavalli
Fisheries Biologist

The Bonneville cutthroat trout evolved in the Bonneville Basin of Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada, and is the only sub-species of trout native to that watershed. This species was once widely distributed throughout its native drainage. However, the current distribution has been greatly reduced by hybridization and competition with introduced species of trout. Habitat alterations have also had severe impacts on the distribution and abundance of this subspecies. These declines have prompted some conservation groups to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to put the Bonneville cutthroat trout on the list of threatened and endangered species.

Adult Bonneville cutthroat trout from the Bear River.

The Bonneville cutthroat trout was once thought to have gone extinct, and little was known about this subspecies. However, when this fish was rediscovered, the Wyoming Game & Fish Department and other entities began doing rigorous research projects, formulating monitoring efforts, and implementing focused management activities. These efforts have been ongoing for over 30 years, and much more is now known about this interesting sport fish. Over the past 8 years, the Wyoming Game & Fish Department has funded several research projects on Bonneville cutthroat trout. Much of that funding was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the State Wildlife Grants program. This work has been conducted by graduate students under the direction of Dr. Frank Rahel at the University of Wyoming. These projects have provided a wealth of important information that will help us to better manage Bonneville cutthroat trout populations in the Bear River drainage.

Helene Johnstone was the first student funded by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department to study Bonneville cutthroat trout. She did research on temperature and habitat conditions in the Thomas Fork (also known as Salt Creek) of the Bear River, and also measured the response of Bonneville cutthroat trout to several temperature regimes in a laboratory setting. Her work showed that some of her study sites had maximum water temperatures that were high enough to kill cutthroat trout, if they are exposed to these temperatures for extended periods. Her laboratory research showed that temperature regimes typical of her field sites caused a reduction in activity and feeding rates when compared to fish in a cooler temperature regime. Willows and other riparian vegetation in the Thomas Fork drainage have been severely impacted by livestock grazing and herbicide application, and this loss of shading is probably responsible for the high water temperatures Ms. Johnstone measured. Given this information, the Wyoming Game & Fish Department has been planting willows in livestock exclosures and working with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to reduce the impact of livestock grazing on riparian vegetation.

"The Bonneville cutthroat trout was once thought to have gone extinct, and little was known about this subspecies."

Amy Schrank implanted radio tags in Bonneville cutthroat trout to monitor their movement patterns in the Thomas Fork drainage. She found that long distance movements (up to 51 miles) were related to spawning activities, rather than temperature regimes. She also found that larger cutthroat trout moved further than smaller fish, but there was no difference in movement patterns based on the gender of the fish. Unfortunately, diversion dams were found to impede upstream movements, and nearly 23% of the radio-tagged fish ended up dying in irrigation canals on the way back downstream after spawning. Trout Unlimited, the U.S. Forest Service, and several other groups teamed up to address these problem by installing fish screens and ladders on the three biggest diversions in the Thomas Fork drainage. These newly installed structures should reduce mortality of cutthroat trout, and allow more adult fish to access spawning sites in the headwaters of the drainage.

Seth White focused his research effort on young Bonneville cutthroat trout. He found that age 0 cutthroat trout fry were limited to small segments of the entire study area, and fish densities declined as drought conditions worsened. Spawning gravel, refuge habitat, and groundwater discharge were important variables related to trout abundance. He also found that cutthroat trout in relatively pristine areas were more evenly dispersed than in areas that had been influenced by livestock. This information has helped us to understand the factors that influence the distribution and abundance of young cutthroat trout and will guide future decisions related to habitat manipulations.

James Roberts looked at the effects of irrigation canals on Bonneville cutthroat trout and other fishes in the Smiths Fork of the Bear River. There are 11 canals in the Smiths Fork drainage and they divert approximately 66% of the total flow. James estimated that the largest canal captured approximately 8,600 fish (12 species) in 2003, and Bonneville cutthroat trout made up about 2% of the fish captured in this canal. Approximately 77% of the cutthroat trout caught in the canal died in the canal system.

(Continued on page 8)

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region Fish Division
117 South Sublette Avenue
Pinedale, WY 82941

Phone: 307-367-4353
Fax: 307-367-4403
Email: matt.kondratieff@wgf.state.wy.us

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Fish Division Mission Statement

As stewards of Wyoming's aquatic resources, we are committed to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations through scientific resource management and informed public participation. We will use an integrated program of protection, regulation, propagation, restoration, and control to provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities. Our efforts will balance the productive capacity of habitats with public desires.

Help Us Stop Illegal Fish Stocking!!!

Moving live fish from one location to another is a criminal offense. Introduced species can destroy existing sport fisheries, costs the Department (and anglers) thousands of dollars to remove, and potentially threatens other rare and endangered species. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department is taking this threat to our valuable fisheries resources VERY seriously! A significant cash reward is now available.

If you have information leading to the arrest of persons illegally stocking live fish in Wyoming, a cash reward of up to **$2,500.00** is available. You may remain anonymous. Call a game warden **(307) 367-4353** or **1 (800) 442-4331**. Don't let a few people ruin the fishing experience for everyone else.

Bonneville Cutthroat Trout (Cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

Andy Carlson is expanding on the work done by James Roberts and Amy Schrank. Like James, he is also estimating the number of Bonneville cutthroat trout that are captured in major canals along the Smiths Fork River, but he is also estimating the total number of Bonneville cutthroat trout that are found in the Smiths Fork River. With this information, he will be able to determine what percentage of the total population of cutthroat trout dies in irrigation canals each year. In addition to this work, Andy is using radio tags to follow the movements of adult Bonneville cutthroat trout in the Smiths Fork drainage throughout the year. Preliminary results show that adult Bonneville cutthroat trout are moving approximately 46 miles per year, and a minimum of 2.5% (2004 data) to 7.4% (2005 data) of the population ends up in canals. With the combined results from the work done by James Roberts and Andy Carlson, we will be able to make better decisions about whether modification of diversion dams will be necessary to facilitate fish movement and survival in the Smiths Fork drainage.

Although there are still many questions about Bonneville cutthroat trout that still need to be answered, the research that has been done over the last several years has given us a much better insight into factors that are impacting populations of this subspecies. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department will use this information to help maintain and improve current populations and ensure a bright future for this native of western Wyoming. Anglers are encouraged to learn more about Bonneville cutthroat trout and the other subspecies of cutthroat trout that are native to Wyoming by participating in the Cutt-Slam. This program is designed to help anglers gain a better understanding and appreciation for cutthroat trout management in Wyoming (see article pg. 3).

Andy Carlson with an adult Bonneville cutthroat captured in the Bear River.